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Editorial

COALS TO NEWCASTLE

At the last annual meeting of our Classical Association, held at Indianapolis, two notable papers were read on "The Value of the Classics to Students of English," and "The Classical Tradition and the Study of English." These papers, most interesting and significant in themselves, had all the greater significance and force because presented by men who could not be accused of special pleading, of defending their own camp, for they speak from the standpoint of the English departments of two great state universities.

The first of these papers was published in the December number of the current volume of the *Journal*, and we take great pleasure in offering the second to our readers in the present number. Our only regret is that in so doing we are bringing considerations to bear upon those who are already in hearty accord with them, and who therefore need no such arguments for classical culture as both these papers contain.

It is becoming more and more evident that the foes of the study of the ancient languages are equally hostile to the modern languages also, including even English as well as foreign tongues. They argue that altogether too much time is spent on mere language and literary expression, counting this but the foam on the real substance beneath.

These critics demand "efficiency," a word much to the front these days, and properly so if properly applied; they say that if a student devotes a year to the study of physics, he has a very definite knowledge of facts and power of manipulation as the result; whereas, if he devotes four years to the acquisition of a foreign

language he has not really acquired that language so that he can make ready and efficient use of it. In other words, language work does not stand the test of efficiency as do most other studies, does not produce tangible results. And so with smug assurance, having weighed this work in their own material balances and found it wanting, they cry "away with it!"

But what is the test of efficiency in language, and where shall we seek it? In the language classroom? Certainly. And there alone? Certainly not. Here is just where our critics fail—perhaps a natural failing for those of narrow vision. The test of efficiency in language teaching is indeed to be sought in the language classroom, and we are entirely right in expecting definite results there. But so far as these definite results are concerned, it is not fair to compare language with physics or manual training or any study of things that can be seen and handled. The acquisition of language is a matter of slow growth, even if it be of the mother tongue, and requires far more time to produce appreciable results than most other studies. It is comparable in this with the other fine arts. How long must a musician or a painter toil, and with little to show for his toil, before he can pass the "efficiency test"?

But while the test of the efficiency of the language work is naturally first to be sought in the place it is taught, the open-minded investigator will not stop there. The study of language is the study of the expression of thought; and any progress in the acquisition especially of a foreign language has put such emphasis upon accuracy of expression, has so exercised the power of expression (which inevitably reacts upon the processes of thought itself), that the results of this training will be found in all other departments of work in which the student may be found. These values are hard to isolate and credit to their proper sources, just as it is impossible to say of a mature man from what particular sources he has gained the various traits, powers, tastes which make up his complete entity; but if the test is approached in fairness, it will not be hard to follow back from many and diverse departments of study to the study of language and the accurate expression of thought.

But after all, this is not the real consideration. The objection to language and literature goes deeper than the ostensible objection on the score of efficiency. The real objection is to all studies which, whatever may be their practical value, are primarily cultural and humanistic. The wolf may as well take off its sheep's clothing, come out in the open, and say what it means. This is not the first time that matter and spirit, things and thought, have clashed. It is the same old war which has always been waged.

But why war? He would be a shortsighted fool indeed who did not see that the manual, the vocational, the material, the practical, must in this world of struggle for mere physical existence be given the first place, in chronological order at least, in our educational systems. The humanists freely grant this, desire it, would not have it otherwise if they could. They are eager to clasp hands with the seekers after the practical, and work with them to the perfect end of the most practical, recognizing always, of course, that to stop with this would be fatal to all higher life. Who then keeps up the war, and continually crowds to the deadly issue? Is it not he who has reversed that most human as well as all-divine judgment and makes it read: "Meat is more than life, and raiment than body"; who tests all values by weight and measure, by dollar-producing power? Can he not see that unless *things* lead on to thought and higher culture, they have no excuse for being, even as things? There is no essential war between these two. There is none, actually, in ruder pioneer settlements: the schoolhouse generally beats the post-office into town. Why then should the war continue so bitterly in our more settled centers? Why may we not all work together in honest and mutual respect and helpfulness each of the other's task? Surely it is high time to call a halt on this most lamentable civil strife and work together for the common cause of both lower and higher education, of practical and humanistic studies.